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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000300

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SCE
THE HAGUE FOR CLIFTON AND JOHNSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/20/2014

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SUBJECT: CROATIA TRYING TO CONVINCE UK IT IS COOPERATING
WITH ICTY

CLASSIFIED BY: DCM PATRICK S. MOON FOR REASONS 1.5 (B,D)

SUMMARY

1. (C) THE UK MAY BE EASING THE CRITERIA BY WHICH IT WILL MEASURE CROATIA'S COOPERATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA (ICTY). IN ADVANCE OF A FEBRUARY 11 VISIT BY FM ZUZUL TO LONDON, A BRITISH EMBASSY OFFICER INFORMED US THAT IF PM SANADER MAKES A CLEAR PUBLIC STATEMENT OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S INTENT TO ARREST AND TRANSFER ICTY PIFWC ANTE GOTOVINA AND MAKES KEY CHANGES TO SENIOR INTELLIGENCE SERVICE PERSONNEL, HMG WOULD AGREE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE RATIFICATION PROCESS OF CROATIA'S STABILIZATION AND ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT (SAA) WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) FROM FEBRUARY 11 - 12, CROATIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MIOMIR ZUZUL VISITED LONDON TO URGE FORWARD PROGRESS TOWARD UK RATIFICATION OF CROATIA'S SAA. THE UK AND THE NETHERLANDS ARE WITHHOLDING RATIFICATION UNTIL CROATIA DEMONSTRATES IN THE MOST CONCRETE TERMS THAT IT IS COOPERATING WITH ICTY. UNTIL RECENTLY, THE PRIMARY BENCHMARK HMG HAS BEEN WILLING TO ACCEPT IS THE APPREHENSION AND SUBSEQUENT TRANSFER TO ICTY CUSTODY OF ICTY PIFWC ANTE GOTOVINA.

3. (C) ON FEBRUARY 9, A BRITISH EMBASSY OFFICER BASED IN ZAGREB BRIEFED US THAT THE UK WOULD NOW CONSIDER MOVING FORWARD WITH THE SAA IF CROATIA TOOK THE FOLLOWING STEPS: PM SANADER MUST MAKE AN UNEQUIVOCAL PUBLIC STATEMENT DECLARING HIS READINESS TO ARREST GOTOVINA AND CERTAIN SENIOR OFFICIALS AFFILIATED WITH CROATIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE THEIR POSTS. THE BRITISH EMBASSY OFFICER SAID THAT ZELJKO BAGIC, A SENIOR STAFFER TO PRESIDENT MESIC, WOULD HAVE TO GO BECAUSE HE HAS MISMANAGED CROATIA'S INTELLIGENCE SERVICES AND HAS BEEN TAINTED WITH CORRUPTION. THE OTHER OFFICIAL WAS DESCRIBED ONLY AS "OFFICIALS WITH CLOSE LINKS TO HERVOJE PETRAC." PETRAC IS NOW A WEALTHY CROATIAN BUSINESSMAN WITH DIVERSE INTERESTS, BUT IS WIDELY RUMORED TO HAVE GOTTEN HIS START IN MONEY-LAUNDERING DURING THE WAR. HE HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF POLICE INVESTIGATIONS, BUT NO INDICTMENTS HAVE BEEN FILED. PETRAC EMPLOYS THE DAUGHTER OF DAMIR LONCARIC, HEAD OF CROATIA'S INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.

4. (C) IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON FEBRUARY 14, BRITISH AMBASSADOR NICHOLAS JARROLD CONFIRMED THAT HMG WAS CONSIDERING CHANGING ITS MEASURE OF HOW TO JUDGE CROATIA'S COOPERATION WITH ICTY. WHILE HE MADE NO MENTION OF THE "PETRAC CONNECTION," HE DID CONFIRM THAT HMG WOULD SEEK BAGIC'S OUSTER.

COMMENT

5. (C) THE UK DECISION -- STILL UNCONFIRMED -- TO MOVE THE GOALPOSTS A FEW YARDS CLOSER WOULD BE A POSITIVE RESULT OF THE SANADER GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT TO CONVINCE THE EU (AND US) THAT CROATIA IS REALLY LOOKING FOR GOTOVINA AND THAT GOTOVINA IS NOT IN CROATIA. BUT THE NEW BENCHMARKS ARE STILL TOUGH POLITICAL HURDLES; IN AN APPEARANCE ON BBC'S "HARD TALK" SUBSEQUENT TO HIS MEETINGS IN LONDON, FM ZUZUL REPEATEDLY DODGED A DIRECT QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD ARREST GOTOVINA.

6. (C) WHILE THE INSISTENCE AT SACKING SENIOR INTEL OFFICIALS COULD SEEM ODD, IT REFLECTS UK FRUSTRATION -- WHICH WE SHARE -- WITH THE INTELLIGENCE ESTABLISHMENT IN ZAGREB. MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN BAGIC'S AND LONCARIC'S ALLEGED CONNECTIONS WITH ORGANIZED CRIME ARE THEIR LINKS TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD CONTACT WITH GOTOVINA. BAGIC WAS REPORTEDLY THE CONNECTION DURING MESIC'S BRIEF (AND VERY INDIRECT) CONTACT WITH GOTOVINA IN 2003. LONCARIC'S CONNECTION TO PETRAC -- WHO IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO BE THE MONEY BEHIND THE SENSATIONALIST NEWSWEEKLY "NACIONAL" -- MAY HAVE LED TO GOTOVINA'S SURFACING IN THAT PUBLICATION AROUND THE SAME TIME. FINALLY, SINCE SANADER CANNOT SACK EITHER BAGIC OR LONCARIC WITHOUT MESIC'S ASSENT, THIS BENCHMARK MAY BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE GOC TO ACHIEVE.

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